HOW THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERODED HUMAN CAPITAL AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

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Outline

- Early childhood development
- School-aged children
- How much recovery has there been?
Early childhood: Declines in enrollment of 5-year-olds, particularly in households with low parental education.
Early childhood: Severe declines in development

Effect of the pandemic on ECD, by level of maternal education

Learning trajectories for two preschool cohorts in Sobral, Brazil

Source: Hamadani et al., forthcoming.
School-aged children: Big differences in length of school closures across regions and countries

Notes: Length of school closure includes full and partial school closures. Each day of partial school closure is counted as half a day of school closure.
Some thoughts on policy: Close schools only as a last resort, and reopen them as soon as possible.

Source: Schady et al. (2023)
School-aged children: Modest declines in enrollment overall, larger in lower-income countries
School-aged children: Very large learning losses

Fuentes: Alasino et al.(2024); Sao Paulo Education Secretariat (April 2021)
School-aged children: Very large learning losses

1 billion children in LICs & MICs missed 1+ years of school; 121 million children in SSA

1:1
1 month of lost learning for every 1 month of school closures.
Ratio of losses to closures higher in countries with lower GDP/capita

21 trillion dollars (present value) in lost earnings over a student’s lifetime globally

*Includes fully and partially closed

Note: No differential effects by gender with larger losses for younger children.
School-aged children: Very large learning losses

approximately 30 percent of learning losses were forgotten learning

Source: Djaker et al. (forthcoming)
Recovery? Evidence from the U.S.

More recovery in wealthier than in poorer school districts: exacerbating inequality

Surprising amount of cross-district heterogeneity, conditional on income

Source: Fahle, Kane, Reardon & Staiger (2024)
Recovery? Evidence from developing countries

- **Guanajuato** (Alasino et al., EER 2024)
  - Learning loss of \(~1\) year of schooling in math, \(\frac{3}{4}\) of year in language
  - Recovery of \(~60\%\) after schools reopened

- **Tamil Nadu** (Singh et al., JHR 2024)
  - Students lost \(~0.73\sigma\)
  - \(\frac{2}{3}\) of deficit made up 6 months after schools recovered
  - \(\frac{1}{4}\) of recovery as a result of after-school remediation program

- **Sao Paulo** (Lichand and Doria, PNAS 2024)
  - On average, students learned only \(28\%\) of normal year learning in 2020
  - \(~40\%\) of recovery of learning losses in 2021
  - Smaller learning losses, and faster recovery, in schools closed for shorter time
  - Extra classes, tutoring, being enrolled in a full-time school, growth mindset delivered by SMS, management support all helped in recovery
And what does all of this mean for policy?